

Interview with Wallace Quarterman, Fort Frederica, St. Simons Island, Georgia, June 1935

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[Alan Lomax (?): *[brief pause here and scratching throughout recording]* All right now!

Zora Neale Hurston: After they said you can go free, then what did you do? Did you run on off the plantation that day? Did you leave the plantation that day after they told you to go free?

Wallace Quarterman: That day master promised so, to give we forty dollars a month in pay. The [lot (?)] said the boys said they ain't want it. They rather go free you know.

Zora Neale Hurston: Uhmm.

Wallace Quarterman: Well, of course, why I have them pay us, you understand? I get along with them you know. He brought out the big pot, you know. *[loud thump]*

Zora Neale Hurston: Yeah.

Wallace Quarterman: And ah, after they, after this place closed down, sword down they just make them, sword down, and they just lay down their sword, and squash them down. You go in Hawkinsville and you see all the swords down now—

Zora Neale Hurston: [Yeah (?)].

Wallace Quarterman: —in the ground. And after the sword was down the tension, in the South tension. And after the South tension then they play. Yeah. Play they. *[he thumbs a washtub base and sings]*

Kingdom Coming

One foot one way. One foot the other way. One foot all around. Jumping. Standing. Couldn't cut a figure. And he couldn't go halfway around. Old master run aw-a-a-a-y. And set them darkies free. For you must be think thy kingdom a coming in the hour of jubilee.

Wallace Quarterman: So we had a big breaking up right there, you know, after it. That's right.

[Alan Lomax (?)] : [*says something inaudible*] What about afterwards? You know when the, when the colored people had the jailer and everything? Tell us about that.

Wallace Quarterman: Yes, we, everything been in we hand. But they couldn't control the colored people. [*thumbs washtub*] They do so much mischief until we have to go on back and to the white people we had education. You know when a man ain't got no education he ain't got nothing. All we tried to show them they wouldn't they just kill one another and going on. So we had to nominate democrat over they head. They didn't like it the many got killed by nominate the democrat but we couldn't help it, to stop them so much killing. You understand?

Zora Neale Hurston: Uhmm.

Wallace Quarterman: So we nominate the democrat, [*washtub*] and we had a big time from that till now.

Zora Neale Hurston: Uhmm.

Wallace Quarterman: The time ain't bad no because we been then.

Zora Neale Hurston: Uhmm.

Wallace Quarterman: Because a man think nothing killing a man and taking a drink of water.

Zora Neale Hurston: Uhmm.

Wallace Quarterman: But since we nominate the democrat we have more assurance. You understand.

Zora Neale Hurston: Yes.

Wallace Quarterman: The law come in protecting them, you know they wouldn't [*yell (?)*] at the colored people.

Zora Neale Hurston: Yeah.

Wallace Quarterman: At all ma'am, at all.

Zora Neale Hurston: Mhmm.

Wallace Quarterman: Yes. And that's the way they come in protect them. But we had we own lawyers, judge and everything, well they just would, run everything in the dust, you know.

Zora Neale Hurston: Yes.

Wallace Quarterman: Kill everything. Couldn't stand it. No, no—

Zora Neale Hurston: Well, did you ever have a office? Did you, would you ever, did you ever hold a office?

Wallace Quarterman: I wouldn't want an office.

Zora Neale Hurston: Oh, yeah?

Wallace Quarterman: No ma'am. I'm a man. I wouldn't want an office. An office ??? kind of thing.

Zora Neale Hurston: Uhmm.

Wallace Quarterman: You understand. You got to go and please the, the fellow you know.

Zora Neale Hurston: Yes.

Wallace Quarterman: You got to stop do what God said. You don't go please that fellow.

Zora Neale Hurston: Yes.

Wallace Quarterman: And they're right there where you left out.

Zora Neale Hurston: But what become of your old master?

Wallace Quarterman: Old master? He died in the yellow fever.

Zora Neale Hurston: Uhmm.

Wallace Quarterman: He was a nice man to me.

Zora Neale Hurston: Yes.

Wallace Quarterman: I wouldn't take anything from him.

Zora Neale Hurston: What was his name?

Wallace Quarterman: Colonel [Fedwary (?)].

Zora Neale Hurston: [Fedwary (?)].

Wallace Quarterman: Yes. And he was a colonel.

Zora Neale Hurston: Mhmm.

Wallace Quarterman: I wouldn't take anything, why me and he was just like one, you know.

Zora Neale Hurston: Yes.

Wallace Quarterman: Yes, ma'am.

Zora Neale Hurston: Well, where was his plantation?

Wallace Quarterman: His plantation on, on Savannah River. You know, Skidaway Island?

Zora Neale Hurston: Uhmm.

Wallace Quarterman: And he had another one Chattum County, you know. Savannah.

Zora Neale Hurston: Yeah.

Wallace Quarterman: Skidaway Island.

Zora Neale Hurston: Uhmm.

Wallace Quarterman: [And umh, yes, sir (?)], I wouldn't take nothing from him.

Alan Lomax: Well, did the white folks like it when you all were in power?

Wallace Quarterman: Oh, they liked me. They would like me all the way, because I protect them, you know.

Zora Neale Hurston: Yes.

Wallace Quarterman: I protect them I told them, I told them the Yankee myself and they didn't feel sorry them you know. You see I just would understand how they think, you know.

Zora Neale Hurston: Yes.

Wallace Quarterman: Tell me things you know.

Zora Neale Hurston: Ahha.

Wallace Quarterman: I see a man going a do a wrong thing I should stop it though. I stop him. Why—

Zora Neale Hurston: Well, did the white people, did your master and all them, like to see the Negroes be the judge and the jailer and everything?

Wallace Quarterman: Whooo! You see according to law you know, they don't mind you be that, I mean, if you know what you doing.

Zora Neale Hurston: Uhmm.

Wallace Quarterman: Don't you see?

Zora Neale Hurston: Yes.

Wallace Quarterman: Yeah. We, we, you see, they, they don't know what they doing.

Zora Neale Hurston: Yeah.

Wallace Quarterman: And they prove that they don't know.

Zora Neale Hurston: Mhmm.

END OF SIDE A